A POPULATION APPROACH TO THE PROMOTION OF MENTAL HEALTH IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### Frequent stressors for students

*\( N = 2596 \)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stressor</th>
<th>Frequently or Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Procrastination</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic/coursework demands</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study/life balance</td>
<td>52.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances and money problems</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Stallman & Hurst, 2011)
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<tr>
<td>Language/cultural issues</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation issues</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Stallman & Hurst, 2011)*
Prevalence psychological distress

![Chart showing prevalence of psychological distress](chart.png)
Changes during semester

(Stallman, Hurst, & Appleton, in prep)
Impact of distress on disability

- **Low**
  - Days out of role: 0
  - Days cut back: 0

- **Moderate**
  - Days out of role: 1
  - Days cut back: 2

- **High**
  - Days out of role: 2
  - Days cut back: 3

- **Very high**
  - Days out of role: 6
  - Days cut back: 6
Impact of distress on GPA

(1 = fail, 7 = high)

GPA vs. Level of Distress

- Low: 5.5
- Moderate: 5.4
- High: 5.2
- Very High: 5.1
Predictors of Distress

35% of psychological distress can be explained by negative thinking patterns

– Coping self-efficacy
– Perfectionism

Other major predictors are

– Sleep problems (10%)
– Stress (5%)
– University Connectedness (14.5%)
Factors contributing to mental health problems in students

- Policy and Funding models
- Universities
- Individual
University Marketing

ON OPEN DAY, WE MAKE YOU OUR... USQ HERO
Students seeking professional help

Overall
Moderate
High
Very high

Level of Distress

%
Prevention is the only sustainable method for *reducing the burden* caused by mental health problems (WHO, 2004)

![Diagram showing prevention strategies]

- Universal
- Selected
- Indicated
- Case Identification
- Standard treatments for known disorders
- Compliance with long term treatment (Reduce relapse)
- Aftercare (including rehabilitation)
Resilience is the capacity to adapt well over time to life-changing or stressful situations.
Prevention Programs

Aimed at empowering students to:

Be resourceful,
Identify and build on strengths,
Solve problems
Manage unpleasant emotions.
Prevention – before university

• School/Parent collaborations to promote
  – Resilience
  – Wellbeing
  – Healthy behaviours
  – Independence
  – Problem solving

e.g. Transition to University Program (Stallman & Ralph)
Prevention – before university

Prevention – within curriculum

Early intervention

Treatment
Prevention within the curriculum

- Inclusive of all students
- Promotes learning
- Promotes wellbeing
- Promotes resilience
- Minimally sufficient
- Able to be implemented

Resilience and Wellbeing as a graduate outcome
Welcome

The Learning Thermometer is a tool to help students:

- Reflect upon their learning;
- Get tailored feedback about strategies, resources, and support that might be useful to them doing well in their subject;
- Develop individual learning plans to optimise their success in the course.

The Learning Thermometer provides teaching staff with:

- Group data at four time points during the semester to help them fine-tune the course to improve student learning outcomes.
- Summary data at the end of semester including:
  - Teaching Value Index (TVI);
  - Student satisfaction;
  - Student engagement;
  - Percentage of surveys completed by each student.
The Learning Thermometer

• Promotes self-management skills
• Links students with resources and supports, if and when the need it
• Provides ongoing feedback to teaching staff throughout the semester to fine-tune teaching
• Predicts 85%-95% of student’s final grade
  (from student distress and teaching quality)
PROMOTING STUDENT SUCCESS AND WELLBEING

**TOOLS**
- Solve a problem
- Where does my time go?
- Getting it done

**MODULES**
- Beating procrastination
- Managing anxiety & worries
- Staying Calm

**QUIZ**
- Take a quiz and get immediate feedback

**Site**
www.thedesk.org.au
Early Intervention

• Integrating low intensity interventions
• Optional coaching option to support low intensity web-based programs
• Cost-effective
  – Sessions average 10-15 minutes
  – Sessions done via telephone, Skype or email
  – Less specialised workforce
Implications for Universities

• Focus on prevention is important
• Access to resources for more students
• Needs addressed sooner...less intrusive
  ✓ More resilient students
  ✓ Better student graduate capabilities

Challenges:

POLICY - CURRICULUM - INTERVENTION
References


